

## File# WR 500 '(Parcels 2, 5-11) – Iron County - 912.3 acres

The Department acquired this property as a part of a larger acquisition from Packaging Corporation of America in 1999. The transaction included 31,890 acres of land in fee and 924 acres in easement for \$25,000,000. At the time of approval, the Natural Resources Board directed the Department to enter into discussions regarding resale or exchanges of up to 7,000 acres of land to County governments and/or Tribal governments.

The parcels included in this review have two-bank frontage on Graveyard Creek and Bell Creek, class one trout streams. There is also two-bank frontage on North Branch Graveyard Creek, a class two trout stream and two-bank frontage on Sturgeon Creek, a class three trout stream.

These parcels fall within an area considered by the Wisconsin Wildlife Action plan as the Winegar Moraine-Moose Creek Conservation Opportunity Area, within the North Central Forest. The North Central Forest contains the best large-scale interior forest management opportunities in the state. There are opportunities to create or maintain large habitat patches, develop or re-establish greater connectivity between forest habitat patches and restore missing and diminished cover types. Restoring conifers to many hardwood forests is a major opportunity in this area. Hemlock and yellow birch, once the dominant species in this landscape, are greatly reduced and declining. The Department has not made investments in infrastructure or habitat improvements, only staff time in administering and establishing timber sales. Because the property lacks road access, use is limited to those that have private adjoining land and the public is restricted to legal access through the creeks intersecting some of these parcels.

The Department has a verbal access agreement through Tribal lands for timber management purposes on some of these parcels; others have not been harvested due to lack of legal access. It is possible the property serves as a connector to nearby snowmobile or ATV trails. There is an active timber sale on the property scheduled to be completed July 1, 2016.

The Department recommends that the Natural Resources Board offer this land for sale under the authority granted by s. 23.145 Wis. Stats., only offered to The Bad River Tribal Nation and Iron County after active timber sales are complete.

